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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Thursday, October 3, 1929

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Housekeepers' Chat

Not for Publication

Subject: "The Care of Rugs and Carpets." From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D.A.  
Bulletin available: "Floors and Floor Coverings."

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Today's program is prompted by a letter from a radio friend who asks advice on the care of rugs and carpets. She is going to buy a new rug for a small living room this fall.

Since her living room is small, she will likely choose a rug which is conservative in pattern. Large, distinct, and colorful designs take up space, and should not be used in a small room, especially in rugs or in wall paper. Wall papers of plain or very indistinct patterns are not tiresome, and make an ideal background for the room furnishings. With plain walls and a plain rug, one may have figured upholstery or figured curtains.

As to the care of rugs and carpets, first of all they should be carefully laid. They wear best on smooth, level floors, and if defects in the floors themselves cannot be remedied, they should be covered up so far as possible by padding, with material made for the purpose, or with carefully arranged layers of newspapers. Papers are especially good under fiber rugs and mattings, because when the rugs are taken up for thorough cleaning, the dirt, which has sifted through, can be removed by simply folding and destroying the newspapers.

Sometimes a large removable rug is used with ingrain or other carpet tacked down around it, to hide an unsightly floor. In this case, the padding in the middle of the room may be covered with carefully laid, overlapping strips of heavy manila paper, held in place by the carpeting. The paper prevents dirt from getting into the padding, and provides a smooth surface easily brushed when the rug is taken up.

After rugs and carpets have been properly laid, the next question is how to clean them, and keep them in good condition, so that they will wear a long time, but without using any more labor and energy than necessary. So far as possible, dirt should be kept out of the house by placing fiber mats at doorways, by insisting that muddy shoes be cleaned outside, and by keeping walks and porches clean.

Frequent and systematic cleaning is better than once-or-twice-a-year cleaning. Many housekeepers have little idea how much furnishings are injured by being allowed to become too dirty.

Sweeping should be made as dustless as possible, by dampening the broom, or by scattering crumpled, dampened bits of newspapers, or moist tea leaves, on the rug. These methods must be used with care, however, for delicate colors may be ruined by too much moisture. If a carpet or rug still seems very dusty after cleaning, wipe the surface with a cloth, wrung as dry as possible, from clear water.



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One of the great advantages of rugs over carpets is that rugs can be taken out-of-doors more easily and often be cleaned. They should be turned, face down, on dry snow or grass. Beat with a flat carpet beater, and sweep thoroughly on both sides. Be careful about shaking rugs vigorously. Shaking gets rid of the dirt, but it is very likely to break threads, and loosen bindings. Beating or brushing rugs or carpets, hung over a line, may also strain or break the threads.

Here's a "helpful hint" about rugs and carpets. A freshly spilled liquid should never be rubbed from a carpet or rug, because this only drives the liquid into the fabric. If possible, the spilled liquid should be covered at once with corn meal, talcum powder, blotting paper torn into bits, or any other absorbent material which will take it up and prevent its spreading.

If you want to know more about rugs and carpets, and how to finish floors of all kinds, write to me for the bulletin on "Floors and Floor Coverings." It is free, while the supply lasts.

Four questions to answer today. First: "Is there a reliable way to remove fruit stains from a white tablecloth?"

Answer: The Bureau of Home Economics recommends this method of removing fresh fruit stains from white, or from fast-colored washable material: Stretch the stained material over a bowl or other vessel, holding it by a string, or an elastic band, if necessary, and pour boiling water upon it from a teakettle held at a height of 3 or 4 feet, so that the water strikes the stain with some force. With some stains, especially those in which fruit pulp is present, a little rubbing, alternated with applications of boiling water, is helpful. A stain remaining after this treatment can often be bleached out by hanging the wet material in the sun to dry. If there is still a stain, after the boiling water treatment, moisten the stain with lemon juice and expose it to the bright sunlight.

The next question is from a housewife who wants directions for cleaning walls. She says someone told her to clean wallpaper with bread dough, and the results were nothing to brag about.

I've never used bread dough on walls, so I can't argue for or against it. I wipe my walls frequently with a broom, covered with a cotton flannel bag. A long-handled soft brush, or a lamb's wool brush, just for walls, would be even better. Use light, even, overlapping strokes, so you will remove the dirt, rather than rub it in. Rub soiled places over radiators, registers, and stoves lightly, with cotton batting. Change the cotton when it becomes soiled. Wipe glazed wall paper with a cloth wrung out of warm, soapy water. Be careful to leave no moisture on the paper. It seeps in at the seams, and loosens the paper.

The next question is from a listener who asks whether I have any bulletins on dresses for children. There are two recent bulletins, "Rompers for Children," and "Dresses for Little Girls," which you'll find helpful. The bulletins are attractively illustrated, and if you're handy with your needle you can make the pretty garments pictured, without a pattern. Did you hear the story about the little boy who dressed up in his brand new trousers, and went to see his grandmother? She pretended not to know him.

"It is some strange little boy," she said.





John was much troubled by this.

"I know it's me, Grandma," he said, looking down at his trousers, "I was there, and saw Mother put them on me."

One more question, before we conclude this program. Somebody wants a recipe for Chili Sauce. You'll find the recipe for Chili Sauce on page 84 of the Radio Cookbook, and I'm sending the cookbook today.

That's all, 'til tomorrow, when we'll have a Sunday dinner menu.

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